Introduction

‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi
“One can learn from many sources.”
—‘Ōlelo No‘eau, Mary Kawena Pukui

This is a book about a people, a place, and a disease. It is not an easy story in which to engage oneself, but it is an important story. Filled with social and cultural challenges of a feared disease, displacement, and death, this microhistory metaphorically mirrors the history of nineteenth-century Hawai‘i as a whole. It is a mo‘olelo—the Hawaiian term used for history, story, tale, myth, tradition, literature, legend, or record—a term carefully chosen, as it is understood that mo‘olelo contain metaphors, lessons, and layers of meaning; it is no different with this particular mo‘olelo. The main focus of this history is Hansen’s disease (or leprosy) in Hawai‘i during the nineteenth century. In particular, it considers the land “set apart,” or the Makanalua peninsula, upon which much of this mo‘olelo unfolded. It is a story about a disease, but more important it is a story about the people who contracted that disease—their connectedness to one another, to their families, to their islands, and to their nation—and how leprosy came to affect those connections and their daily lives.

In the midst of a plethora of infectious diseases brought to the Hawaiian Islands during the early nineteenth century, leprosy was set apart in the public and professional discourse as one to be feared rather than to be treated. Lands and people were set apart in an effort to combat that fear and to “prevent the spread of leprosy.” As a result of being set apart, the lands of Makanalua inherited a unique chapter in the history of Hawai‘i. Subsequently, as this mo‘olelo demonstrates, the isolation of this peninsula has contributed to its unique strength. Today, the peninsula embodies an archaeologically rich history, a precious environmental
history, and the profound social, cultural, political, and medical history of a unique community formed in the 1860s.

Those who were set apart and exiled to Makanalua after 1866 established a settlement fraught with challenges and hardships that were at times unspeakable, yet they found ways to persevere. They were a people who exemplified Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) culture of the nineteenth century and who often exemplified strength in the face of adversity. They remained politically active and, at times, defiant. They struggled with the changes brought about by outsiders, by politicians, and sometimes by each other. They resisted authority and the policies that threatened their agency, their connections to family and homeland, and their dignity. In this “new” community, as much as they suffered from their separation from loved ones, many established new bonds and cared for one another in ways that have often been overlooked in popular histories describing leprosy in Hawai‘i. This was a community whose inhabitants dealt with the daily struggles of life (and often death) in the midst of a kingdom that was in transition and striving to withstand the pressures of the outside world. They persevered in living when many in society had relegated them to a forgotten death in banishment. The Kānaka Maoli of Makanalua exemplified their humanity in the face of the most challenging circumstances—living, dying, and surviving within the physical, medical, political, emotional, spiritual, economic, social, and cultural context of this disease experience known as ma‘i lepera.

Scholars are beginning to pay more attention to the role of disease in history, both in terms of the global and local concerns raised by disease. As a significant component of biological exchange, the disease experience and its consequences have sparked considerable interest. Biological exchange has always been a consequence of people’s interactions with one another, whether through sharing food, exchanging genetics, or introducing new flora, fauna, or diseases. Subsequently, the biological exchange of disease has also influenced the history of human communities—politically, economically, socially, and culturally.

Indeed, our history has often been affected by shifting disease patterns, and as our human communities have constantly altered their environments, we have also influenced changing disease patterns. That is, disease patterns change whenever the environment (physical or social) is altered because changes in the environment give disease an opportunity to emerge or re-emerge. This can happen in many ways, including the exchange between groups of people and new diseases that result from cross-cultural encounters.
Such encounters were experienced in Asia, Europe, and northern Africa during the 1300s through the 1500s as a result of trade connections and the movement of people and rats. The Black Death spread, creating devastation throughout these areas. In the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth century, disease (particularly smallpox) played a significant role as multiple groups encountered one another. When we look at the history of the Americas and Oceania over the last five hundred years, once again disease is at the forefront of the encounters between foreigners and indigenous peoples. But in each of these cases the introduction of new diseases caused more than depopulation—its appearance created psychological, cultural, social, economic, and political implications. Historians such as Alfred Crosby, William McNeill, Sheldon Watts, Philip Curtin, Charles Rosenberg, and Elizabeth Fenn have called our attention to the role that disease has played in the past—even though it is less definable, less calculable, less tangible than most scholars would like.

The cross-cultural encounter with foreigners also influenced disease patterns in the history of Hawai‘i. Many diseases have come to these shores and crossed the beaches of experience and understanding. Indeed, with its historically more recent interaction with foreigners, as Alfred Crosby has suggested, the Hawaiian Islands can be used as a model to better understand the influence of disease in history, in particular the introduction of infectious diseases to the Americas. But beyond serving as a model to better understand depopulation in other parts of the world, the role that these diseases have played in the history of Hawai‘i itself must also be examined.

The introduction of infectious diseases to the indigenous (and isolated) population of Hawai‘i by foreigners resulted in high rates of depopulation. The pattern has been demonstrated in the introduction of venereal diseases, tuberculosis, cholera, smallpox, influenza, and measles. Each of these infectious diseases was introduced to the Hawaiian population through cross-cultural interaction with foreigners. But the introduction and spread of leprosy differed in many significant ways. Leprosy is a disease that typically lingers before becoming manifest, and it does not take its victim quickly. Its disfigurement can be visibly disturbing. Further, because of its prolonged pathology, disfigurement, and what was believed to be its highly contagious nature, leprosy was viewed and treated differently from other infectious diseases. Leprosy also carried a greater stigma than most other diseases.

Scholars have given leprosy (also known as Hansen’s disease) a fair
amount of attention, contemplating its role in history and its appearance in various parts of the world. In the context of medieval Europe, medical historian Guenter Risse examined leprosy as a tool for segregation, whereas historian Mary Douglas explored the ways in which the mere accusation of having leprosy was used to remove the unwanted from society. Also within the history of medieval Europe, historian Sheldon Watts considered the “dark hidden meanings” given to leprosy and how, through European-based cross-cultural interaction, those “meanings” were later transferred to the colonial world. More recently, works by medieval medical historians such as Luke Demaitre and Carole Rawcliffe have added a much more nuanced analysis to our understandings of leprosy in the middle ages.

In terms of the history of leprosy and colonialism, scholars, including Megan Vaughan and Eric Silla, have looked closely at the role of this disease in Africa. In another exemplary case study, Jane Buckingham examined leprosy and its treatment (isolation) as a justification for and demonstration of colonial power in India, asking the profound question of whether, in the name of quarantine, the leprosy sufferer was treated as “patient or prisoner?” Warwick Anderson included leprosy in his examination of the role of medicine in the American colonization of the Philippines, while Michelle Moran further analyzed this disease in the context of the early twentieth century in the United States, comparing public health issues and circumstances in Molokai, Hawai‘i, and Carville, Louisiana. Rod Edmond broadened the scope once again with an analysis of leprosy during the era of British imperialism, paying special attention to the influence Hawai‘i’s experience with the disease had on British policy. In his study, Edmond noted that “the operation of a health/disease dichotomy was a crucial, but very unstable, marker of difference within and across these defining characteristics of race, gender and class.”

Although leprosy in Hawai‘i has garnered some amount of attention on its own, it has most often been discussed through the lens of Father Damien’s experience. Gavan Daws’ Holy Man: Father Damien of Molokai remains one of the best biographies of the Belgian priest. Indeed, Damien’s narrative is appealing particularly in regard to the subjects of giving charity and service to others—he was the ordinary man who accomplished extraordinary things—but this singular focus has often overshadowed and obscured the experience of thousands of Kānaka Maoli. Instead, Father Damien (also known as Kamiano to Hawaiians of his day) could be viewed as a mea kōkua (helper) to those who suf-
fathered from leprosy—one of many who went to the Kalawao and Kalau-papa leprosy settlements to assist those in need. Indeed, the stories of the mea kōkua also need to be told. But more important, the focus on Father Damien has served to distract attention from the stories of the patients, mainly Native Hawaiians, who suffered from leprosy and were challenged by society’s treatment of the disease and who were exiled to the settlements at Makanalua peninsula.19

This book is an attempt to add another layer of understanding to the known history of leprosy and infectious disease in Hawai‘i. It strives to consider what it was like for those who contracted the disease, those who were subject to a law (suspected, arrested, sentenced) for having leprosy, and those who were sent to a “natural prison” as a result. It examines how some with leprosy resisted that law as well as the treatment of isolation. For those who went to the leprosy settlement at Makanalua, it asks what it was like to live with the disease and to die, separated from their loved ones. It also explores how this disease and its treatment affected Kānaka Maoli, their ‘ohana (family), and their connections to the ‘āina (land).

Answering these questions is not an easy task and requires more than one approach. One of the methodologies employed in this research is that of ethnographic history. Concerned with process and the result of encounters, ethnographic history endeavors to draw meaning out of an event, a ritual, or a moment, and it often employs metaphor as a way of illustrating different viewpoints and meanings. Ethnography has long held a special attraction for Pacific Island historians. Indeed, much of the inspiration on how to approach the topic of this project has come from some of the best examples of ethnographic history by Pacific Island scholars such as Greg Dening, Marshall Sahlins, Margaret Jolly, Nicholas Thomas, David Hanlon, Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, and Anne Perez Hattori. But it has also been greatly influenced by the work of ethnographic historians whose topics sometimes lie outside the Pacific, namely Inga Clendinnen and Rhys Isaac.

Though The Transformation of Virginia is not a work in Pacific history, in it Rhys Isaac utilizes a variety of traditional and imaginative sources to offer a portrait of the social order constructed by Virginia’s gentry in the eighteenth century. His is a social history that looks at the transformation of religion and authority. For Isaac, history is an interdisciplinary and interpretive exercise in which the historian must rely upon his or her imagination as well as evidence.20 When applied to the history of leprosy in Hawai‘i, the ethnographic approach offers exciting
possibilities as it provides the historian the opportunity to dive below
the surface of the popular record to search for voices yet unheard, to
translate the silences, and to find meaning in those past experiences.

The greatest challenge in the history of leprosy in Hawai‘i is finding
the voices of those yet largely unheard: the sufferers of the disease. In
an effort to reconstruct the nineteenth-century experience of Hawaiians
with leprosy, many sources have been utilized, some traditional and oth-
ers that have required considerable imagination and creativity. I have
relied heavily upon the Board of Health minutes and reports concern-
ing leprosy in the Hawaiian Kingdom for the general parameters of
this history. Also of significance to this book is the unpublished man-
uscript written by Ambrose Kanoeali‘i Hutchison.21 A part-Hawaiian
leprosy patient, Hutchison was sent to Kalawao in 1879, served as a
resident superintendent of the settlement for several years, and remained
at Makanalua until his death in 1932. While his manuscript is largely
dedicated to telling the story of Father Damien, Hutchison also gives
us glimpses of what life was like at Kalawao for the typical leprosy suf-
ferer: the hardships, the joys, the loneliness, the triumphs, and, at times,
society’s disregard. Further archival materials used include many of the
letters written to the Board of Health by patients, their families, and
other concerned subjects regarding leprosy during the period from 1865
to 1900. Though not as personal as one might like, these letters also
offer a window to the past experiences of those dealing with the disease
and its treatment.

‘Ōlelo no‘eau (proverbs or poetical sayings) concerning Molokai,
Kalaupapa, health, disease, and leprosy, along with particular mele
(chants and songs) have also been utilized as sources. Other published
sources have been examined in an effort to look for deeper meaning
regarding this disease experience. These sources include the letters of
Peter Kaeo to his cousin, Queen Emma. As Kaeo spent three years at
Makanalua (1873–1876), his correspondence with Queen Emma relates
to many issues of Hawaiian history in the nineteenth century, but it also
offers some insight into the daily experiences of life at the settlement.

Finally, and perhaps most important, I have utilized the voices of
those patients who expressed themselves in the Hawaiian-language
newspapers of the nineteenth century. While this source does not allow
us to hear from every person sent to Makanalua in the 1800s, those we
do hear from offer us some poignant and meaningful insights into their
mo‘olelo. Like a chorus, their voices now rise from the depths of a cul-
turally colonized obscurity, no longer to be forgotten.22
One of the most meaningful definitions of history I have ever heard is that history is a dialogue between the past and the present. That is to say that as we in the present ask questions of the past (and of our sources into that past), answers arise and often evoke new questions to be asked—sometimes of the same materials, sometimes of completely new sources. The conversation between past and present continues, and the discipline of “history” thus continues as a living, evolving, and, we hope, an improving entity. Throughout the historiography of Hawaiian history the questions asked and answered have been framed by the concerns of their various presents, just as our current concerns influence the questions we ask of the past. Thus, within the history of Hawai‘i, there are many questions yet to be asked and answered, and there are many sources yet to be cultivated and understood.

The prominent histories of Hawai‘i that were written in the nineteenth century often told of chiefly society prior to foreign encounters, of Hawaiian mythologies and folklore, and of Hawaiian culture and traditions. For instance, originally written in Hawaiian as a series of newspaper articles, Samuel Maniaikalani Kamakau’s Ke Kumu Aupuni and Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii recorded the traditional history of the chiefs as well as the changes that were affecting Hawaiian society as a result of interaction with foreigners. Kamakau also wrote articles telling of the common people and their traditions and ways, providing a political, cultural, and social history of Hawai‘i and a foundation upon which other historians could build.

David Malo wrote about Hawaiian culture and traditions as well. Also originally in Hawaiian, Malo’s work preserved a rare glimpse of a way of life that was in some ways sharply altered, and at times quickly fading, as the encounter with foreigners continued. His work continues to be a rich resource for those interested in Hawaiian social and cultural history. John Papa ‘Ii served the Kingdom of Hawai‘i during the years of the Kamehameha dynasty, experiencing the many transitions of the monarchy and nation. His Fragments of Hawaiian History provides a unique primary account of political, religious, and social concerns of the early nineteenth century. Kepelino’s Traditions of Hawai‘i, by Kepelino Keauokalani, is yet another significant offering of the complex Kānaka Maoli intellectual tradition of the nineteenth century and
offers insight on some specific topics in Hawaiian cultural traditions and history. 

In many ways, Mary Kawena Pukui continued the scholarly traditions of the nineteenth century in her numerous volumes of work. From her efforts in recovering and preserving the Hawaiian language, mele, and ‘ōlelo no‘eau to her many writings about Hawaiian culture, family, and social structure, Pukui also provided a valuable contribution and service to future scholars. What Kamakau, Malo, ‘I‘i, Kepelino, Pukui, and many others also offer to the contemporary historian is an emphasis on Hawaiian-language sources.

By the mid-twentieth century, Hawaiian historiography was largely dominated by histories written to illustrate the political causes and consequences that informed Hawai‘i’s past, and they supported an “Americanization” process well underway in the islands. Beneficial in their archival research, details, and description of events, these works certainly have their place in the layers of the Hawaiian historical narrative. What these works lack, however, is an emphasis on the social history and motivations that surrounded the events under analysis and more specifically a Hawaiian perspective of those events. But by the latter half of the twentieth century, these silences were beginning to be addressed.

Certainly, as has been seen throughout the discipline of history, historians have begun to ask new and different questions, placing more emphasis on social and cultural history. This has been true of Hawaiian history as well. Today, with the resurgence of the Hawaiian language and culture in the islands, the Hawaiian voice is not only being recovered from the past, but the Native Hawaiian scholar is becoming a pivotal messenger of that voice. It is essential that those who embark upon a serious analysis of events in Hawaiian history endeavor to employ as many sources as possible. No event in history is without its complexities and ambiguities, and it is therefore necessary to view an event from as many perspectives as possible in our effort to reconstruct a more complete view of the past. When it comes to histories that include the cross-cultural encounter, it is even more imperative that the historian strive to place him- or herself in both worlds and, at the same time, acknowledge that he or she is a stranger to both—or perhaps at best a “beachcomber.”

This research offers an attempt to help recover a Hawaiian perspective in the history of leprosy in the islands through the use of many sources, traditional and nontraditional, published and unpublished,
English and Hawaiian. It tells the story of a disease, of a changing society’s reaction to that disease, and of the consequences of that experience. It is a compelling story for many reasons. Not only did the experience of leprosy in the Hawaiian Islands influence the way leprosy was dealt with in other parts of the world, but the changes that leprosy and its treatment brought about in Hawai‘i itself were highly significant. It separated individuals from their families, their friends, and their communities, and it significantly altered perceptions and identities. It separated Native Hawaiians from their land (to which they were genealogically and cosmologically linked); it fractured society and changed Hawaiian ideas about health, illness, and treatment. It changed how Hawaiians viewed themselves in that by the end of the nineteenth century, the “diseased” had become a cultural “other” to the healthy Hawaiian. Moreover, it reinforced colonial ideology and furthered the use of both biomedical practices and disease as tools of colonization.

**Environmental History + Hawaiian Models and Metaphors**

Environment, experience, and culture not only share a reciprocal relationship, but all three help to define concepts of health, disease, and medicine for any society. The social and geographical environment of isolation that Makanalua offered to those suffering from leprosy had a significant impact on their experience with the disease. The connotation of the peninsula as a “natural prison,” the hardships of life in isolation without proper resources, supplies, or medical care, the stigma of a disease labeled as punishment, and the daily experiences with disease and death all influenced the life of the leprosy sufferer. Further, the relationship between the environment and the historical actor is a significant and dynamic one. As environmental historian William Cronon explains,

> Environment may initially shape the range of choices available to a people at a given moment, but then culture reshapes environment in responding to those choices. The reshaped environment presents a new set of possibilities for cultural reproduction, thus setting up a new cycle of mutual determination. Changes in the way people create and re-create their livelihood must be analyzed in terms of changes not only in their social relations but in their ecological ones as well.
Essential to this history of leprosy in Hawai‘i is the relationship between the Kānaka Maoli and the ‘āina (land and, by extension, environment). The land—its influence, connections, and uses—in the history of leprosy in Hawai‘i must be discerned. Thus, there are some Hawaiian concepts that are of particular importance to our understandings of this history because they speak to Hawaiian connections to the land and can provide us with the necessary metaphors.

Some scholars have asserted that it is important to look for Hawaiian metaphors to use as models when striving to reconstruct the past from a Hawaiian perspective.37 The best metaphors are found in the Hawaiian language itself, for language is intimately connected with cultural concepts.38

‘Āina is the Hawaiian term for land, but it is much more than that. Literally, the term means “that from which one eats.” According to Hawaiian traditions, the akua (gods) made the ‘āina, thus “having been born of the Akua, the ‘Āina is itself an Akua.”39 Further, Kānaka Maoli are connected to the land and to each other through the parentage of Wākea, “from whom all Hawaiian genealogies stem as the ancestor of the Hawaiian people.”40 Moreover, as Native Hawaiian scholar David Malo explained, “commoners and chiefs were all descended from the same ancestors, Wākea and Papa.”41

Thus, it could be suggested that all Hawaiian mo‘olelo begin with a Kumulipo (known as a Hawaiian creation chant), in which the genealogical sequence of the birth of the land is provided.42 The metaphor provided by the Kumulipo is indeed significant to this study, which concerns separations and new connections to the land (islands and peninsulas). Kame‘eleihiwa suggests that the essential lesson of a Kumulipo is that “every aspect of the Hawaiian conception of the world is related by birth, and as such, all parts of the Hawaiian world are one indivisible lineage.”43 Kame‘eleihiwa further asserts that

When recounting a history in Hawaiian terms it is, therefore, important to examine the beginnings of and the relatedness of the players. These genealogical relationships form the parameters of cultural patterns inherently reproduced in Hawaiian history.44

Then it is of great significance that the gods, land, and chiefs are all considered divine in Hawaiian mo‘olelo. This is important to understand because it speaks directly to Hawaiian identity. Kame‘eleihiwa explains:
Hawaiian identity is, in fact, derived from the Kumulipo, the great cosmogonic genealogy. Its essential lesson is that every aspect of the Hawaiian conception of the world is related by birth, and as such, all parts of the Hawaiian world are one indivisible lineage. Conceived in this way, the genealogy of the Land, the Gods, Chiefs, and people intertwine with one another and with all the myriad aspects of the universe.\(^{45}\)

It is essential to understand such relationships if one hopes to comprehend the changes that were influenced by external forces such as foreign disease and treatments for disease. These diseases did not just attack Kānaka Maoli bodies; metaphorically, and often literally, they devastated the islands and their people as well.

The connection between the land and the people is best exemplified in the Hawaiian concepts of ʻāina, mālama ʻāina, and pono. They are significant and connected in that it is the duty of all Hawaiians to mālama ʻāina (care for the land) and, in return, the ʻāina will mālama the Hawaiians, thus achieving pono (well-being, balance). Disease, of course, was construed as a disruption of this balance.

These important lessons are also illustrated within the moʻolelo of Wākea. The historical metaphor offers us great insight, first of all into “man’s familial relationship to the Land, that is, to the islands of Hawaiʻi and Maui, and to the kalo Hāloa-naka, who are the elder siblings of the Hawaiian Chiefs and people.”\(^{46}\) That is the relationship that is reflected in the tradition of mālama ʻāina. The land is the elder sibling of the people. It is the duty of younger siblings and junior lineages to love, honor, and serve their elders. Kameʻeleihiwa explains, “The Hawaiian does not desire to conquer his elder female sibling, the ʻĀina, but to take care of her, to cultivate her properly, and to make her beautiful with neat gardens and careful husbandry.”\(^{47}\) And by the same token, the land is there to care for the people: “it is the reciprocal duty of the elder siblings to hānai (feed) the younger ones, as well as to love and hoʻomalu (protect) them.”\(^{48}\)

The metaphor of the relationship between the land and the people is an essential one, and it provides us with an understanding of a Hawaiian worldview and lifeway (how a community relates to its environment).\(^{49}\) This understanding is significant in finding models with which to reconstruct the past. Greg Dening, in Islands and Beaches, teaches that models are imposed whereas metaphors are understood. He suggests that understanding others can have two meanings, that is, “it can mean entry
into the experience of others in such a way that we share the metaphors that enlarge their experience” and therefore help us better understand encounters of the past, or we can translate it into a model that only illuminates our present consciousness.

The hope is that one can attempt a more accurate history by constructing a model based on the metaphors of the culture being studied. In other words, with the application of this methodology, this work endeavors to study the Kānaka Maoli experience with leprosy based on Hawaiian metaphors or understandings. If Kānaka Maoli perceptions of the land, and their physical connection to the land as well as to one another, can be reconstructed and understood, then it may also be possible to explore how those attitudes may have changed over time as a result of their encounter with foreign diseases, including leprosy.

There are not as many records as we would like left by Native Hawaiians directly affected by leprosy, so the challenge is to find a way to reconstruct their experience so that we might have a more complete understanding of the history of leprosy in Hawai‘i. In such circumstances, Greg Dening has suggested that ethnographic historians (indeed, all scholars) also learn to translate the silences, especially when it comes to striving to find the culturally colonized voice.

Even as this is a study of the Hawaiian experience with leprosy, using Hawaiian models based on Hawaiian metaphors to illuminate this piece of the past, it must also take into consideration the haole (foreign, Euro-American) metaphors that were at work during this experience with leprosy in Hawaiian history as well. The haole metaphors must also be acknowledged because, as Kame‘elehiwa explains, the two realities (Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian) must be presented side by side in order to present “a more plausible reconstruction of the historical events.” Yet it must also be recognized that culture and its metaphors are not fixed, but rather continue to change with time.

Thus one of the questions to be addressed through this research is how leprosy influenced the transformations of cultural metaphors and models of the land, of Kānaka Maoli connections to the land, and of Kānaka Maoli perceptions of the body, disease, and medicine from a Hawaiian perspective. Likewise, how foreigners and foreign metaphors and models of Hawaiians with leprosy influenced the transformations of these cultural metaphors and models will also be considered.

It is my contention that through the use of Hawaiian and foreign metaphors and models, combined with an attention to the environment of Makanalua, another layer of understanding can be added to the his-
history of leprosy in the islands—in particular the daily struggles of living with a disease such as leprosy. It is time that we give a voice to those who contracted and suffered from the disease and gain some insight into their daily lives, that we go beyond those histories that have focused on the exemplary service of one Catholic priest, and tell the story of—or give a voice to—those he served. It is a formidable task indeed in that, as anthropologist Arthur Kleinman has stated, “we, each of us, injure the humanity of our fellow sufferers each time we fail to privilege their voices, their experiences.”

On one level, my overarching theme is quite simple. A peninsula was geologically “set apart.” Geographically, the Hawaiian Islands are “set apart” from the other Pacific islands. Of the many infectious diseases introduced to the islands, one (leprosy) was “set apart” from the others—in its history, its slow pathogenesis, its requisite long-term treatment, and its overwhelming consequences. Because of this, the influence of this “setting apart” or isolation (environmental and cultural) on the history of the Hawaiian Islands was profound.

But in the midst of a host of infectious diseases, leprosy was set apart from the rest as something much more to be feared. Land(s) and people were set apart as a way of dealing with the disease (and the fear of the disease). As a result of being set apart, the Makanalua peninsula not only inherited a unique chapter in the history of Hawai‘i, but also, because of its natural attributes (coupled with the culture of quarantine), the isolation of this peninsula has made it stronger. Today it maintains a rich archaeological history, contains an environmentally abundant natural history, and embodies a plentiful history of community, layer upon layer.

Moreover, as a result of being set apart, those sent to Makanalua since 1866 not only exemplified strength in the face of adversity, but they exemplified Native Hawaiian culture of the nineteenth century. They remained politically active and defiant. They struggled with the changes brought about by outsiders, politicians, and each other. They resisted authority and policies that took away their agency, and they cared for one another in ways that have often been overlooked. They dealt with the daily struggles of life and death in a changing society at a time when many in the larger world had all but forgotten them. And they did it all in the face of the most challenging of circumstances: the physical, medical, political, emotional, spiritual, economic, social, and cultural context of one of the world’s most dreaded diseases—leprosy.

Since I first began this research, my main goal has been to explore
and understand the history of leprosy in the Hawaiian Islands from the viewpoint of those who suffered from it the most—the patients and their ‘ohana—the Kānaka Maoli. Every major event in the history of nineteenth-century Hawai‘i has been influenced in some way by the introduction of new diseases and the subsequent depopulation of Native Hawaiians (dismantling of the kapu system, religious conversion, the mahele and resulting land claims, the immigration of labor to support the developing plantation economy, political changes, to name a few). For those readers unfamiliar with the history of the Hawaiian Kingdom, I offer a descriptive chronology (mo‘olelo) at the beginning of each chapter. Basically framed around the reigns of Hawai‘i’s Mō‘ī (see the
chart in the previous section), these historical vignettes are meant to take the reader to a relevant point in the chronological narrative before the specific chapter in this history of leprosy continues. It is also hoped that the history of leprosy in the islands may be better understood as a part of this larger historical context.

The first chapter, “A Land and a Disease Set Apart,” sets the historical context for this work in terms of the environment and landscape of the Hawaiian Islands in general and the island of Molokai and the Makanalua peninsula in particular. Here the theme of Makanalua and ma‘i lepera standing alone, or being socially, culturally, and historically set apart, is established. It also includes a general look at the disease of leprosy, placing it in the larger context of foreign diseases introduced to the Hawaiian Islands in the nineteenth century. A biomedical explanation of Hansen’s disease (leprosy), along with its cultural history, is offered. A general history of leprosy in Hawai‘i is also outlined.

Focusing on the local experience, the second chapter, “The Criminalization of Leprosy in Hawai‘i,” discusses the ways in which the disease and its victims were “criminalized” through their treatment in Hawai‘i. The laws that regulated this disease and the implementation of those laws are discussed. Attention is given to the “punishments” meted out in the policies of isolation and to the specific case of a convicted criminal (a Native Hawaiian) being used for experimentation, in hopes of finding a cure.

The chapter that follows, “Accommodation, Adaptation, and Resistance to Leprosy and the Law,” considers the ways Hawaiians and those afflicted with the disease resisted the 1865 Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy and its application. Native Hawaiians responded in a variety of ways to both the epidemic and to the Kingdom’s response to it. While there was some accommodation and adaptation to the Board of Health policies, there was also resistance, which came in many forms and which was at times violent. Above all, these various reactions demonstrate that Native Hawaiians were not merely victims, but active participants in this disease experience that affected so many.

Chapter 4, “Living with Disease and Death at Makanalua,” deals directly with life in the leprosy settlement—with the daily onslaught of disease and death—in a supposedly isolated environment. Presented largely from the perspective of the Board of Health, it looks at the problems associated with the isolation policy, but it also considers the demonstrated agency of Native Hawaiians in this history. Kānaka Maoli sought ways of treating/curing the disease, gave kōkua (help,
service) to fellow sufferers, and found ways to survive in their isolated condition.

“The Journey into Exile” follows and offers a direct examination of the letters and articles that patients wrote to the many nūpepa ʻōlelo Hawai’i (Hawaiian-language newspapers) in the middle to late 1800s. From their writings we are privy to the most personal of moments—simple but profound experiences of living with the disease, being separated from loved ones, living in banishment, surviving, and forming a new community—a home in exile.

Returning to a larger context, the final chapter, “Maʻi Hoʻokaʻawale—The Disease That Separates,” considers the consequences of this disease, its treatment, and its history on the Hawaiian individual, community, and culture. It places the disease into the context of Hawaiian social and political history of the nineteenth century and discusses the role of leprosy, and its treatment, in the larger process of cultural colonization and medical imperialism that was at work in the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Lastly, an epilogue to the volume offers a brief summary of the status of Hansen’s disease and the Makanalua peninsula in Hawai‘i today.